

WASHINGTON D.C. – Standing on the National Mall with the Smithsonian Castle behind him, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA – 31) announced today that he will introduce The National Museum of the American Latino Action Plan Commission Act of 2003 – legislation to establish and fund a federal commission to explore the viability of creating the “National Museum of the American Latino” in Washington, D.C.

“If you take a walk down the National Mall, you will get as good a snapshot of America as you can find anywhere in this country,” Rep. Becerra said. “Yet the lessons of our history, art and culture are still incomplete.”

If signed into law, the newly-formed “Commission to Establish the National Museum of the American Latino” would consist of 23 members chosen from a wide array of professional groups, including museum associations, academic institutions, and organizations committed to the research and study of American Latino life, art, history and culture. Charged with formulating a plan of action for the creation and maintenance of the museum, from the initial fundraising to the availability of the various possible collections that would be housed in the new museum, the commission’s report would be due to Congress two years after the enactment of Rep. Becerra’s legislation.

If constructed, the National Museum of the American Latino would be the 17th institution of the diverse, expansive collection of Smithsonian museums.

“Both native and foreign-born Latinos in the United States have influenced and enriched this country since our nation’s founding and continue to make significant contributions in academia, to the arts and the humanities, and in popular culture, for the benefit of all Americans,” Rep. Becerra said. “These contributions should and must be recognized on a scale that is fitting of those contributions.”

According to the Census Bureau, there are approximately 40 million Latinos living in the United States. The Latino population has grown nearly 60 percent between the 1990 and 2000 census.

“I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, particularly, Chairman Ciro Rodriguez and Rep. Solomon Ortiz, the chair of the CHC’s Arts and Entertainment Task Force, to garner further Congressional support for this undertaking,” Rep. Becerra said.

“When completed, the National Museum of the American Latino will be a welcome addition to the Smithsonian family. This process will not be a fast one – but it will be successful.”